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**2003-2004 No Child Left Behind—Blue Ribbon Schools Program**  
**Cover Sheet**

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Name of Principal Mrs. Diane Brown  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Gruver Elementary School  
(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address P.O. Box 1139 – 405 Garrett Street  
(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address)

Gruver Texas 79040-1139  
City State Zip Code+4 (9 digits total)

Tel. (806) 733-2031 Fax (806) 733-5412

Website/URL www.gruverisd.net E-mail diane.brown@region16.net

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\* Mr. David Teal  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Gruver Independent School District Tel. (806) 733-2001

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Terry Sherrill  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this package, including the eligibility requirements on page 2, and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## **PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION**

**[Include this page in the school's application as page 2.]**

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes grades K-12. (Schools with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has not been in school improvement status or been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's adequate yearly progress requirement in the 2003-2004 school year.
3. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, it has foreign language as a part of its core curriculum.
4. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 1998.
5. The nominated school or district is not refusing the OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
6. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if the OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
7. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school, or the school district as a whole, has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
8. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

**DISTRICT** (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district:    \_\_\_1\_ Elementary schools  
     \_\_\_ Middle schools  
     \_\_\_1\_ Junior high schools  
     \_\_\_1\_ High schools  
     \_\_\_ Other (Briefly explain)
- \_\_\_3\_ TOTAL

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure:    \_\_\_\$7101\_\_\_
- Average State Per Pupil Expenditure:    \_\_\_\$5030\_\_\_

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- ☐ Urban or large central city  
☐ Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area  
☐ Suburban  
☒ Small city or town in a rural area  
☐ Rural
4. 7\_\_\_\_\_ Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.
- \_\_\_\_\_ If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?
5. Number of students enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total		Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
<b>K</b>	14	11	<b>25</b>		<b>7</b>			
<b>1</b>	13	16	<b>29</b>		<b>8</b>			
<b>2</b>	15	11	<b>26</b>		<b>9</b>			
<b>3</b>	11	17	<b>28</b>		<b>10</b>			
<b>4</b>	8	15	<b>23</b>		<b>11</b>			
<b>5</b>					<b>12</b>			
<b>6</b>					Other - PK	3	13	16
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL →								147

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the students in the school:
- |                   |                                  |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| _____             | 41 % White                       |
| _____             | % Black or African American      |
| _____             | 59 % Hispanic or Latino          |
| _____             | % Asian/Pacific Islander         |
| _____             | % American Indian/Alaskan Native |
| <b>100% Total</b> |                                  |

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: \_\_\_\_\_15\_\_\_\_%

(This rate includes the total number of students who transferred to or from different schools between October 1 and the end of the school year, divided by the total number of students in the school as of October 1, multiplied by 100.)

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	11
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	10
(3)	Subtotal of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	21
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1	140
(5)	Subtotal in row (3) divided by total in row (4)	.15
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	15

8. Limited English Proficient students in the school: \_\_\_\_\_32\_\_\_\_%  
 \_\_\_\_\_47\_\_\_\_Total Number Limited English Proficient

Proficient

Number of languages represented: \_\_\_\_\_2\_\_\_\_\_

Specify languages: English and Spanish

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: \_\_\_\_\_65\_\_\_\_%

\_\_\_\_\_95\_\_\_\_Total Number Students Who Qualify

If this method does not produce a reasonably accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families or the school does not participate in the federally-supported lunch program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: \_\_\_\_\_12\_\_\_\_%  
 \_\_\_\_\_17\_\_\_\_Total Number of Students Served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

___ Autism	___ Orthopedic Impairment
___ Deafness	___ 2_ Other Health Impaired
___ Deaf-Blindness	___ 4_ Specific Learning Disability
___ Hearing Impairment	___ 10_ Speech or Language Impairment
___ 1_ Mental Retardation	___ Traumatic Brain Injury
___ Multiple Disabilities	___ Visual Impairment Including Blindness

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

**Number of Staff**

	<u><b>Full-time</b></u>	<u><b>Part-Time</b></u>
Administrator(s)	___ 1___	_____
Classroom teachers	___ 10___	_____
Special resource teachers/specialists	___ 1___	_____
Paraprofessionals	___ 1___	_____
Support staff	___ 2___	___ .5___
Total number	___ 15___	___ .5___

12. Average school student-“classroom teacher” ratio: \_\_\_ 13:1\_\_\_

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. The student dropout rate is defined by the state. The student drop-off rate is the difference between the number of entering students and the number of exiting students from the same cohort. (From the same cohort, subtract the number of exiting students from the number of entering students; divide that number by the number of entering students; multiply by 100 to get the percentage drop-off rate.) Briefly explain in 100 words or fewer any major discrepancy between the dropout rate and the drop-off rate. (Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates and only high schools need to supply drop-off rates.)

	2002-2003	2001-2002	2000-2001	1999-2000	1998-1999
Daily student attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
Daily teacher attendance	97%	97%	98%	97%	97%
Teacher turnover rate	23%	3%	0%	2%	4%
Student dropout rate	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Student drop-off rate	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Notes for attendance – 01-03 was the period when 3 teachers were widowed.

Notes for turnover rate – 98-99 --1 retired, 99-00 --1 moved, 1 retired, 01-02 --1 moved, 02-03 --2 retired, 2 moved (1 in each group having been widowed the previous year)

## PART III - SUMMARY

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Gruver, Texas, is at the top of the Texas Panhandle -- just under the little Oklahoma Panhandle -- and to be more exact, halfway between Dallas, Texas, and Denver, Colorado! We are rural, to say the least, with a total population of 1100 people. The school and the churches are the hub of the community. Gruver Elementary is a wonderful place to educate our 147 children -- PK-4th grades. We have many descriptors that would indicate we might not have a successful school -- i.e. 65% economically disadvantaged, 32% Limited English Proficient (ESL), 46% migrant, and 46% at-risk. We are a Title I school. As our demographics began to change several years ago, we made a conscious, site-based decision to teach children with a no-excuse philosophy for student achievement and make full use of instructional time allotted. We needed a great deal of training to be prepared to meet that goal. We found a way to get it. We needed a literacy library if we planned to begin balanced literacy. We found a way to buy it, beginning with a walk-a-thon where teachers walked for donations. We needed supplies, and we found a way to get them. Many of these things, as well as many others, were paid for with two Academics 2000 Grants for \$175,000 each. We spent the money wisely and carefully, making sure each dollar was spent for improving student achievement. Every book chosen for the read-aloud section of our library was read prior to purchase. The staff was serious about improving our school. We learned that "good can be the enemy of best," because we had become satisfied with current practice and were in a complacent mode. We now are one of the best, but we are not complacent. We challenge ourselves to constantly achieve higher goals, experiment with new ideas, evaluate our methods against current research, and try again when at first we do not succeed.

We have a strong family-school connection. Our tone is positive, friendly and welcoming, and we serve all children equally. Unhappy parents can be counted on one hand during the past seven years. We embody an image that is put forth to the community and our parents that we care about each and every child. As the Danish Proverb says, "Who takes the child by the hand takes the mother by the heart." We include parents in their vital role in the learning process of their children and provide numerous opportunities for them to have a voice in school management decisions through conferences, Open House, Parent Advisory Council, and the Campus Improvement Team. We have an open door policy in the classrooms and the principal's office.

Gruver Elementary teachers are continually assessing students and their needs and adjusting their instruction to facilitate maximum learning. Our school has earned the exemplary accountability rating 7 of the last 9 years with 100% in reading and math the last two years. This achievement is in spite of a rise in at-risk children and changing demographics. It can only be credited to the continuous improvement of a dedicated staff that is very loving and caring.

Our staff does not simply love and care about children. Our empathy and service for our coworkers have been put to a tremendous test the past three years. Beginning in the fall of 2000, three teachers' husbands passed away within 23 months. Two were sudden deaths. The men ranged in age from 36 to 54. The effects were profound, not only for the wives who work here, but for everyone. We were (and still are) a grieving community and school. It was very difficult for everyone to put the needs of children first when so many of the adults were so fragile. The strength of the employees was amazing. All teachers continued to do their jobs to the best of their abilities, and students continued to flourish. In fact, the spring of '02 was when we scored 100% on all reading, writing, and math tests, and one of the third grade teachers had lost her husband in January. The staff is strong and supportive of one another when there is a need.

While we are fortunate to have a Reading Recovery teacher on staff, we have no classroom teacher aides. We accomplish what we do with 10 regular education teachers and the Reading Recovery, ESL, and Special Education teachers (3 total).

We have a very simple mission statement: *Bless all children with love, knowledge, and fairness to enable them to reach their highest potential.* These simple words reflect the character of our school culture. We teach each child as if he/she was our own.

## PART IV – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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### IV 1. ASSESSMENTS

Gruver Elementary utilizes numerous sources of assessment data to drive instruction. Foremost in grades 3 & 4 is the state assessment test, Texas Assessment of Knowledge & Skills (TAKS), a benchmark criterion-referenced test to assess student mastery of the Texas Essential Knowledge & Skills (TEKS), student expectations of what our students should know and be able to do to be academically successful. The TAKS is a “snapshot” of student performance, assessing the parts of the TEKS curriculum most critical to students’ academic learning and progress. In Gruver Elementary, it assesses reading and mathematics at the third grade level and the same core subjects plus writing in the fourth grade. The test is divided into test objectives, broad statements that “break up” knowledge and skills to be tested into meaningful subsets around which a test can be organized into reporting units that help campuses, parents, and the community understand the performance of students. Gruver Elementary has vertically aligned our instructional program to reinforce the unifying strands of learning each year through grade-level-appropriate instruction. Data from the Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) from the state alerts the staff to specific areas of content that need to be addressed as well as population subgroups that are not having their learning needs met. We look at all areas and subgroups that are below the 90% as possible areas needing modification of the curriculum. All students with disabilities are included in the state assessment system. They are assessed annually utilizing the TAKS, the State-Developed Alternative Assessment (SDAA), or a Locally Developed/Determined Alternate Assessment as determined to be appropriate by the child’s admission, review, and dismissal committee. Students with limited English proficiency are given the Reading Proficiency Test in English (RPTE) until achieving an advanced level of mastery. As indicated by our statistics, the philosophy and practices of Gruver Elementary do not compromise or lower our standards for any student with disabilities or a language barrier. Our staff and programs provide the scaffolding to move a student from assisted to independent learning as quickly and as completely as possible.

In kindergarten and first grades, the Observation Survey of Early Literacy Achievement is given to gain “systematic observations of children who are in the act of responding to instruction.” This test is given to inform the teaching process, specifically whether the child is making adequate progress in reading and writing. The observation tasks include letter identification, concepts about print, word tests, writing, and hearing sounds in words. Teachers also make detailed observations of students using anecdotal records and running records to observe the child’s text reading behaviors.

The Metropolitan Achievement Test (MAT 8), a norm referenced test, is given annually in grades kindergarten, first, and second. The group test is designed to measure students’ achievement in reading, mathematics, language, science and social studies. In addition to giving us a great deal of valuable data about each child, the MAT 8 is on the state approved list for exiting children from the English as a Second Language program. Students are also given the OLSAT, a test that measures the cognitive abilities that relate to a student’s ability to learn and succeed in school.

The Texas Primary Reading Inventory tests phonemic awareness (a primary indicator for being at-risk for dyslexia), graphophonemic knowledge, comprehension, and fluency. It is an excellent indicator of students “at-risk” of failure in reading. It is administered two-three times per year beginning after Christmas in kindergarten.

Additional informal assessments are administered in math, phonics, spelling, and grammar to determine mastery of elements being taught. Those skills not mastered are retaught until the student is successful. All informal and formal assessment results are organized by individual student. Each teacher keeps these records in binders to be viewed by the teachers, the parent, administration, and/or the Student Success Team (SST see IV 2), if necessary.

## IV 2. ASSESSMENT DATA AND PERFORMANCE

Preparing students for learning begins in our school long before the third grade TAKS test. Assessment is used to identify not only the strengths and/or weaknesses of students but of the curriculum as well. At-risk indicators have been developed for *all* students, beginning with our prekindergarten students. In kindergarten, students are assessed utilizing the Observation Survey (OS). The OS identifies students that may not have preliteracy skills and/or phonological awareness developed at an age-appropriate level. At-risk students are placed in literacy groups with a Reading Recovery teacher for supplemental instruction in literacy. Beginning at mid-term in kindergarten and continuing through second grade, the Observation Survey, fluency testing, and/or the Texas Primary Reading Inventory are utilized to determine if any students are disadvantaged and need any Tier II level instruction (see V2). That instruction takes place with their regular education teacher or the Reading Recovery teacher. Early intervention is a high priority, where difficulties are prevented, rather than remediated later on in a child's life. Portfolios are maintained on every child and go with the child from grade to grade to help instructors plan appropriate instruction for the child, building on his/her strengths to minimize existing weaknesses. Teachers at all grade levels tutor students as needed for them to be successful, but a thirty minute block of time is set aside daily for grades three and four to attend DEAR time. This frees the teachers in those grades to work with individuals or small groups to assure mastery of the TEKS. Peer tutoring is also utilized, with fourth grade students helping first grade students during the tutorial block. As is stated in our Title I School-Parent Compact, "We will demonstrate a no-excuse philosophy for student achievement, regardless of home based issues, problems facing the child, resource difficulties, or any other circumstances. When results do not meet expectations, we will reflect upon our own efforts to find opportunities to improve our instruction." Our Student Success Team consists of nine faculty members who are very involved in assisting with student improvement, focusing on student learning as the end and teaching as the means. They engage professionally to help the child's teacher plan differentiated instruction to help diverse learners who are brought to their attention. The Reading Recovery, English as a Second Language, and Dyslexia/Special Education teachers all work with the regular education teachers to share expertise and perspectives on shared students to allow each child to reach his/her highest potential.

## IV 3. COMMUNICATION

Open House and conferences involving *all* parents have been held in the fall for the past several years. Teachers are persistent until 100% of the parents have received the information from those meetings. Beginning in prekindergarten, additional conferences are held annually, at a minimum, with parents of "at-risk" students. All formal and informal assessment data, as well as anecdotal records, are kept in the child's portfolio, and it is communicated to the parent anytime there is a conference, in addition to strategies to help their child at home. Summer school is held for at-risk students and "summer camps" are held for the parents. The parent component of summer school is a valuable means of communication between the school and the home. Any child that is put in Tier II or III (see V2) level instruction with anyone other than the regular education teacher is informed by letter, and conferences are held to facilitate parental involvement in the programs offered to the child. Parents are sent three-week notices if children are at-risk of failing, and report cards are sent to parents at the end of each reporting period. Texas provides an excellent "Report Card" reporting system for the TAKS, which is sent containing the previous year's data to all elementary parents. It is in both English and Spanish, as is our School-Parent Compact, our Student Handbook, our Parent Involvement Policy, and teacher to parent communications. As a part of our migrant program, biannual meetings are held with the parents to inform them of educational practices in Gruver Elementary and give them an opportunity to ask questions of the migrant coordinator or the staff. This has been highly effective. Many of our parents are Non-English speaking, and their attendance indicates they feel this is a non-threatening environment (though all meetings are translated for parents) that provides an excellent forum of learning for them in which they can participate in the educational process of their child. They learn the expectations the school has for their child and how their child is performing based on assessment data. Gruver ISD maintains a web site on which campus



achievement data is made available to the public. An end-of-the-year assembly is attended by a large percentage of parents as well as community members, where exceptional performance is recognized for all grade levels on the campus. Students are involved in an assembly every reporting period where high performance is recognized as well as a biannual “Honor Roll Breakfast.” All are recognized in the local newspaper. Students are continually and consistently praised for academic as well as behavioral improvements. Students that have reached excellent levels in Accelerated Reading have been recognized with rewards such as the following: prizes, ringing the victory bell at football games, being the “water boy” at athletic games, and cheering with the cheerleaders.

#### IV 4. SHARING SUCCESSES

Gruver Elementary has been, and continues to be, a school facing all the challenges of changing demographics for the past several years. In 1995, our Limited English Proficient population was 41.6%. Today our Hispanic population is 60% of our students. One of the reasons we have been so successful is the fact that we have visited other schools with similar problems and/or successful practices we wished to emulate. Beginning in 1998, we have visited four Blue Ribbon schools, two Promising Practices site visits is LaJoya and Austin, Texas (made possible by Region 16 ESC), two schools in Amarillo, and two visits to Lubbock to visit a balanced literacy elementary school. In realizing the benefits of these visits, we have since maintained an open door, mentorship policy. Our successful school has not happened by accident, but through learning from others. Gruver Elementary is now being noted for its high level performance, and we enjoy the opportunity to share our success story. Annually for the past three years, administrators from other schools have visited our campus with teams of teachers to observe successful techniques used by our teachers. The students are accustomed to having visitors, and our school welcomes them. Four of our teachers have provided summer staff development to another school that wanted to begin balanced literacy. The staff believes that staff development and sharing with fellow educators provide opportunities to share expertise and perspectives on the teaching and learning processes. While the best way to demonstrate the richness of everyday instruction at Gruver Elementary is on-site visits, we are a great distance from most of the state of Texas. We can also share through videoconferencing, the Internet, and the telephone. We welcome the opportunity to grow and learn from others as well as to share our philosophy of education.

## PART V – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

### VI. CURRICULUM

The curriculum in Gruver Elementary is driven by our state-mandated objectives in the TEKS. While the TEKS are critically important, we consider them to be only the skeleton of our curriculum. Our curriculum undergoes continual renewal and adjusting as warranted by student needs. We have found that a cohesive and integrated network of programs best facilitates learning.

While the campus utilizes Saxon math, it is highly supplemented with other materials at all grade levels. The curriculum is enriched with computer generated curriculum leveled for each child specifically. The student progresses at his/her own rate of success. Teachers have been trained with strategies to help students master the TEKS objectives as well as good classroom instruction practices at all grade levels. Enrichment practices include poems, songs, chants, creative movement, and hands-on manipulative experiences that are integrated across the subject areas.

The Ohio State University Literacy Collaborative Framework is the structure of our integrated reading/language arts program. While the framework is a flexible organizational tool, all eight components of balanced literacy are prioritized daily where applicable and included in lesson plans. Because reading, writing, listening, and speaking are so interrelated, children must be given the opportunity to practice the strands of language arts in connected and purposeful ways. The language arts block is ideally an uninterrupted three hour block, though sometimes that is impossible due to our Tier II and III instruction. The paradigm of thinking with the staff is that the value of each component depends

solely on the organization and effectiveness of the classroom teacher. Literacy libraries are not only maintained in the individual classrooms, but a campus-wide literacy library is available to all staff including guided reading books, read-alouds, big books, and professional books. Approximately \$50,000 has been spent since the initial 2001 grant on these books. Each teacher has a binder of all reading selections on the campus so everyone can use the resources. These binders are updated annually. Students write daily, not only journaling, but also writing in the genres aligned for each grade level during staff development. The writing is assessed on a continuum which is passed from grade to grade, monitoring the individual growth of each writer. Randi Whitney's Writing Academy is utilized in kindergarten through fourth grades to help teachers instruct using brain compatible techniques. Saxon phonics is currently being taught in K-3rd grades, and word work is an emphasis at all grade levels. Our spelling program is aligned with our balanced literacy approach. Accelerated Reading supplements the core curriculum as an at-home reading component. Basals and other materials are used for read-alouds and to assure that all skills are covered and mastered at each grade level.

The goal of the Physical Education program in our school is to gain self-confidence in an area other than the regular classroom. The curriculum is based on the TEKS and is developmentally appropriate for the children. Various sports are introduced, while including skills for coordination, agility, and the general physical development of all students.

The science and social studies TEKS objectives are grouped into units which are taught from a reading, technology, and experience standpoint. Reading material for these subject areas is centered on all of the following: the text, read-alouds, guided reading books, and periodicals. Many computer and Internet programs are utilized to enhance units and/or promote understanding. Other important aspects include hands-on activities and experience boxes, as well as a school-wide science lab facilitated by a parent volunteer.

Art plays an important role in giving students an opportunity for individual expression and an opportunity to creatively demonstrate understanding of objectives taught in all academic disciplines. The curriculum is centered around Arts *Attack*, a video tape series which addresses objectives designed to teach our state standards.

Our technology program includes, but is not limited to, Waterford Reading, Math & Science, a Distance Learning Lab, video streaming, CCC/Pearson whole curriculum, STAR reading and math, and Accelerated reading and math.

The dedication of the staff at Gruver Elementary is never in question. Everyone feels personally responsible for providing high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and caring environment that enables all children to reach their highest potential. Our standards are extremely high for all stakeholders. Excluding speech services, less than 5% of our population receive special education services. Less than 40% of those students began their education on our campus, and one of those students is monitored only. Of our students, 32% are ESL, but only 5 of those students are in third or fourth grades and they are recent transfer students. By the end of the second grade, the majority of our students exit the ESL program. Our TAAS/TAKS scores in both grades 3 and 4 have been 100% for the past two years. Our early interventions are working!

## V 2. READING CURRICULUM

Gruver Elementary utilizes the balanced literacy approach within the Three Tiered Reading Model for our integrated reading/language arts program. Lessons for balanced literacy were developed by surveying the research and descriptive literature, examining research on language and literacy learning, and involving classroom teachers and Reading Recovery teachers in action research since 1984 (Fountas & Pinnell, Guided Reading). The framework allows for authentic opportunities in reading and writing that complement the twelve essential components of the Texas Reading Initiative and the TEKS. The Three Tiered Reading Model is a prevention model that is aimed at catching students early -- before they fall behind -- and provides the supports they need throughout the first years of schooling. Tier I reading instruction is designed to address the needs of the majority of our students. During core classroom reading instruction, students are at various levels of development in critical early reading skills. Some students

require more intensive instruction in specific skill areas. Using flexible grouping for guided reading and targeting specific skills, classroom teachers are often able to meet the needs of those students. Guided reading groups are leveled specifically for each child using Rigby benchmarks and running records, which are recorded on an individual growth chart. Reading aloud and shared reading are facilitated through our various literacy libraries. Independent reading is promoted through the Accelerated Reading program, the Pizza Hut Book-It Program and our local Dairy Queen, which gives our children ice cream sundaes for meeting advanced goals in reading. The interventionist in Tier I is the classroom teacher. Tier II is designed to meet the needs of *disadvantaged* readers for whom focused instruction within the regular classroom setting is not adequate. These students require supplemental instruction in addition to the time allotted for core reading instruction. They receive intensive individual or small group reading instruction to support and reinforce skills being taught in the regular classroom. The interventionist may be the classroom teacher or the reading recovery teacher. We have often found our Tier II needs-based instruction particularly beneficial in the successful transition of students entering our school from other schools. Tier III is intensive intervention for *disabled* readers who require instruction that is more explicit, more intensive, and specifically designed to meet their individual needs. The interventionist may be the special education teacher who is also our dyslexia therapist. Movement through the tiers is a dynamic process, with students entering and exiting as needed. It is responsive to students' strengths and weaknesses and changing needs in reading.

### V3. WRITING CURRICULUM

Writing became an important part of our curriculum when we began to implement balanced literacy. The goal of our writing instruction became maximizing each child's writing potential at each grade level, rather than "teaching to the TAKS" in fourth grade. We participated in staff development through Texas Tech and Region 16 ESC to learn how to teach each of the four writing components of balanced literacy: shared writing, interactive writing, writer's workshop, and independent writing. In shared writing, the teacher and children work together to compose messages and stories with the teacher as the scribe. With interactive writing, the teacher and children "share the pen," a technique that involves children in the writing. With guided writing, or writer's workshop, children engage in writing a variety of texts. The teacher guides the process and provides instruction through minilessons and conferences with individual students. We strive to instruct children to read and write at the same level, building on their strengths and providing adequate time during *each* day to reach that end. In independent writing, children write their own pieces, in addition to stories and information pieces. This may include retellings, labeling, speech balloons, lists, etc. We use Shurley English to teach the parts of speech and Randi Whitney's Writing Academy to help teach the writing process. For the 02-03 school year, K-4th teachers taught to schoolwide writing prompts each six weeks for the entire year, including Narrative, How To, Poetry, Expository, Story Writing, and Persuasive. Stories were posted in the hall. This strengthened the staff as well as the students, and we developed a writing continuum on which to document student growth. Each grade level uses a different color, and the continuum remains in the portfolio from one year to the next to drive the child's instruction based on his/her individual strengths and weaknesses. This year each grade level has streamlined the requirements, but kindergarten continues to address five of the six genres they did last year. On TAKS last year, 52% of our students achieved a rating of 3 out of 4 on their compositions, indicating our approach is working successfully. We had no 1's, which is the lowest rating. Our students write independently in their journals on a daily basis, much of which is prompted by shared reading. Due to the growth we see, even at the kindergarten level, we consider this to be an extremely important part of the writing curriculum. Writing is addressed across the curriculum. For example, the music teacher teaches the Shurley jingles, math answers are justified through narrative in journals, and writing practices are carried over into social studies and science activities.

#### V4. INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Due to the low socio-economic status and/or English language deficiency so prevalent in Gruver Elementary, we have many students at-risk for reading failure. These students are coming to school without life experiences, lap hours, or a strong native language, thus resulting in delayed English language acquisition or dual-language loss. The most pressing need is to improve early childhood and primary student achievement before the window of opportunity is closed in the early childhood years. We have found it very beneficial to train our children's first teachers, their parents. We have a three-year-old program two days a week for a one and one-half hour time period to promote literacy for those families whose environment has not been conducive to reading, learning, and exploration. Parents must accompany the child, and they are able to check out books in either Spanish or English. We also have a migrant program for three-year-olds in the home called the Building Bridges Program. We have seen significant evidence of improvement in preliteracy skills and readiness for prekindergarten due to these two programs and the accompanying parent component. In our classrooms, the following takes place to improve instruction and promote success for students: author studies; multisensory activities to address different learning styles of children, including Kagan Cooperative learning activities; Daily Oral Language to improve grammar skills; math meeting boards and other similar activities that spiral and repeat necessary skills. In addition, there are peer, high school students, and community volunteers tutoring students; small group instruction, particularly in reading, math, and writing; and modifications and accommodations to enable all disadvantaged and/or disabled learners to grasp the objective. Many methods are used to provide extrinsic motivation to promote student learning: field trips; exciting internet experiences; centers with a unique approach to reteaching; and assemblies and/or prizes for improvement in all subject areas and Accelerated Reading. The new science lab, facilitated several times per month by a parent volunteer, has brought science to life for our children and improved learning. Support personnel directing programs such as Reading Recovery (a short-term early intervention program that provides extra help for children who are having some difficulty learning to read), English as a Second Language, Special Education, and our Alphabetic Phonics Program for students exhibiting the characteristics of dyslexia and other related language disorders work very closely with the teachers to make sure their curriculum supports classroom instruction. Technology including Waterford reading, math, and science and our CCC/Pearson lab provide support for classroom instruction. All teachers are well-versed in Bloom's Taxonomy and Erickson's Structure of Knowledge so that instruction and questioning are higher order and more complex in nature.

#### V 5. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Beginning in 1998, Gruver Elementary embarked on an intense process of long-term planning and staff development to train our educators to utilize balanced literacy strategies. Our goal was to systematically increase the capacity of the general education teachers to educate *all* students, familiarizing them with research-based strategies that work. Utilizing funds from an Academics 2000 Grant, a Texas Tech University professor was hired to consult with our staff in facilitating a "literacy lab". Two teachers from the staff (one a Reading Recovery teacher and the other a previous Title I reading teacher) taught the teachers and the students at the same time, using Strategies That Work, as well as other sources. First through third grades came for six week blocks, two hours per day. One hour was focused on reading and the other on writing. This began a unique awareness of the professional community of our staff and how interdependent we all are for students to be successful. Teachers not involved in the rotation block of instruction were granted release time to observe the lab. Since that time, the teachers have worked in concert to produce cumulative effects in the learning of *all* students, narrowing the learning gaps we had previously seen dominant in our Hispanic population. Teachers have visited other teachers, other schools, and participated in Texas Reading Academies and area workshops to learn effective strategies for all areas of our curriculum. We meet on a monthly basis and discuss any issues of concern regarding instruction and curriculum, as well as sharing successful practices, materials, and strategies. Alignment to this staff is much more powerful than examining TEKS. Rather it is an alignment of effective strategies, meaningful language, and the collaboration of learning that makes effective educators realize there is always more to

learn to meet the challenges of changing demographics that is so much a part of our school today. When monetary issues restrict off-campus staff development, teachers take the responsibility for their own learning. They read books from our professional library, which contains the latest books, and share during the year the practices they have found helpful for instruction. Continuing professional development has had a tremendous impact on improving student achievement. We truly came to believe, and have proven with our TAKS scores, that “good is the enemy of best.” We were a “good” school, but our school is much better as a result of the interaction and a collective sense of responsibility for student learning that we have learned through professional staff development. Our efforts are driven not by statistical data from our school as a whole, but by what we can do to enhance the education of each and every student on an individual basis.

## **PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

From 1998 until 02-03, the scores reflect the Texas Assessment Academic Skills (TAAS). Since 03, Texas has used the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). Both tests are published by the Texas Education Agency and are updated annually. Texas does not have established categories like the sample format. The State Board of Education (SBOE) sets the performance standards in Texas and are as follows: Met Minimum Expectations – passing (as set by the SBOE), Mastered All Objectives – mastered every objective on the test (NA on TAKS), and Commended Performance – approximately 94% correct in third grade and 95% correct in fourth grade. While both tests measure the statewide curriculum, the TAKS test is more difficult in nature and requires higher order thinking than the TAAS. Testing times are from February – April, assuming third grade reading is passed. Testing for a child that fails that test can last into June. The state scores for third grade reading would indicate passing over three administrations. None of our students failed the first administration, so our scores reflect the first administration only. We are very proud of the fact that we have few exemptions. We generally test children sooner than the law dictates, particularly for LEP children. If a special education child’s ARD committee decides the child is not able to take the TAAS/TAKS, he/she is administered a state-developed alternative assessment (SDAA) or a locally developed alternative assessment (LDAA), whichever is appropriate. Non-English/limited English proficiency children are administered the Reading Proficiency Test in English (RPTE), as determined by their Language Proficiency Assessment Committee until achieving an advanced level.

### THIRD GRADE READING

	2002-2003 TAAS	2001-2002 TAAS	2000-2001 TAAS	1999-2000 TAAS	1998-1999 TAAS
Spring Testing					
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	94%	97%	92%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	61%	76%	47%	84%
% Commended Performance	35%	39%	36%	19%	28%
Number of students tested	17	28	33	32	25
Percent of total students tested	89%	93%	100%	91%	100%
Number of students excluded	2	2	0	3	0
Percent of students excluded	11%	7%	0%	9%	0%
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
1. Hispanic					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	93%	94%	82%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	45%	64%	24%	67%
% Commended Performance	18%	11%	9%	3%	8%
Number of students tested	11	11	14	17	12
2. White					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	95%	100%	100%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	71%	84%	73%	100%
% Commended Performance	67%	29%	27%	16%	20%
Number of students tested	6	17	19	15	13
3. Economically Disadvantaged					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	93%	94%	83%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	67%	73%	14%	67%
% Commended Performance	29%	18%	6%	6%	8%
Number of students tested	7	9	11	14	12
<b>STATE SCORES</b>					
% Met Minimum Expectations	90%	87%	86%	87%	88%
% Hispanic Met Minimum Expectations	85%	83%	82%	83%	84%
% White Met Minimum Expectations	96%	94%	93%	93%	93%
% Eco. Dis. Met Minimum Expectations	84%	81%	80%	81%	81%

### **THIRD GRADE MATH**

	2002-2003 TAAS	2001-2002 TAAS	2000-2001 TAAS	1999-2000 TAAS	1998-1999 TAAS
Spring Testing					
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	97%	77%	96%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	19%	24%	41%	44%
% Commended Performance	18%	15%	15%	24%	16%
Number of students tested	17	27	33	34	25
Percent of total students tested	94%	90%	100%	97%	100%
Number of students excluded	1	3	0	1	0
Percent of students excluded	6%	10%	0%	3%	0%
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
1. Hispanic					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	100%	83%	91%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	10%	21%	33%	17%
% Commended Performance	0%	4%	3%	9%	0%
Number of students tested	11	10	14	18	12
2. White					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	95%	69%	100%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	24%	26%	50%	69%
% Commended Performance	50%	11%	12%	15%	16%
Number of students tested	6	17	19	16	13
3. Economically Disadvantaged					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	100%	77%	92%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	22%	9%	20%	17%
% Commended Performance	0%	4%	3%	6%	0%
Number of students tested	7	9	11	15	12
<b>STATE SCORES</b>					
% Met Minimum Expectations	91%	87%	82%	80%	82%
% Hispanic Met Minimum Expectations	88%	83%	78%	75%	79%
% White Met Minimum Expectations	96%	93%	90%	88%	90%
% Eco. Dis. Met Minimum Expectations	86%	81%	75%	72%	75%

## **FOURTH GRADE READING**

	2002-2003 TAAS	2001-2002 TAAS	2000-2001 TAAS	1999-2000 TAAS	1998-1999 TAAS
Spring Testing					
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	59%	67%	71%	60%
% Commended Performance	48%	44%	42%	46%	40%
Number of students tested	25	32	33	24	30
Percent of total students tested	96%	97%	100%	96%	97%
Number of students excluded	1	1	0	1	1
Percent of students excluded	4%	3%	0%	4%	3%
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
1. Hispanic					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	57%	65%	60%	42%
% Commended Performance	27%	16%	12%	21%	7%
Number of students tested	11	14	17	10	12
2. White					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	61%	67%	79%	72%
% Commended Performance	64%	28%	30%	25%	33%
Number of students tested	14	18	15	14	18
3. Economically Disadvantaged					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	67%	67%	50%	33%
% Commended Performance	44%	16%	12%	21%	20%
Number of students tested	9	9	15	8	12
<b>STATE SCORES</b>					
% Met Minimum Expectations	86%	92%	90%	89%	88%
% Hispanic Met Minimum Expectations	81%	89%	87%	85%	84%
% White Met Minimum Expectations	93%	96%	95%	95%	94%
% Eco. Dis. Met Minimum Expectations	79%	88%	85%	84%	82%



## **FOURTH GRADE WRITING**

	2002-2003 TAAS	2001-2002 TAAS	2000-2001 TAAS	1999-2000 TAAS	1998-1999 TAAS
Spring Testing					
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Met Minimum Expectations	92%	100%	91%	96%	100%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	34%	42%	79%	61%
% Commended Performance	13%	0%	0%	13%	0%
Number of students tested	24	32	33	24	28
Percent of total students tested	92%	97%	100%	96%	90%
Number of students excluded	2	1	0	1	3
Percent of students excluded	8%	3%	0%	4%	10%
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
1. Hispanic					
% Met Minimum Expectations	91%	100%	100%	90%	100%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	14%	41%	70%	36%
% Commended Performance	9%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Number of students tested	11	14	17	10	11
2. White					
% Met Minimum Expectations	92%	100%	80%	100%	100%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	50%	40%	86%	76%
% Commended Performance	15%	0%	0%	8%	0%
Number of students tested	13	18	15	14	17
3. Economically Disadvantaged					
% Met Minimum Expectations	91%	100%	100%	91%	100%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	11%	47%	63%	36%
% Commended Performance	22%	0%	0%	4%	0%
Number of students tested	9	9	15	8	11
<b>STATE SCORES</b>					
% Met Minimum Expectations	87%	89%	89%	90%	88%
% Hispanic Met Minimum Expectations	84%	86%	87%	86%	85%
% White Met Minimum Expectations	92%	94%	92%	94%	92%
% Eco. Dis. Met Minimum Expectations	82%	85%	85%	85%	83%

## **FOURTH GRADE MATH**

	2002-2003 TAAS	2001-2002 TAAS	2000-2001 TAAS	1999-2000 TAAS	1998-1999 TAAS
Spring Testing					
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	100%	100%	90%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	31%	21%	64%	33%
% Commended Performance	36%	19%	9%	56%	23%
Number of students tested	25	32	33	25	30
Percent of total students tested	96%	97%	100%	100%	97%
Number of students excluded	1	1	0	0	1
Percent of students excluded	4%	3%	0%	0%	3%
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
1. Hispanic					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	100%	100%	73%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	14%	24%	50%	17%
% Commended Performance	18%	3%	6%	12%	3%
Number of students tested	11	14	17	10	12
2. White					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	44%	20%	73%	44%
% Commended Performance	50%	16%	3%	44%	20%
Number of students tested	14	18	15	15	18
3. Economically Disadvantaged					
% Met Minimum Expectations	100%	100%	100%	100%	81%
% Mastered All Objectives	NA	0%	20%	50%	8%
% Commended Performance	22%	0%	9%	16%	3%
Number of students tested	9	9	15	8	12
<b>STATE SCORES</b>					
% Met Minimum Expectations	88%	94%	91%	87%	87%
% Hispanic Met Minimum Expectations	84%	92%	89%	83%	84%
% White Met Minimum Expectations	95%	97%	95%	93%	93%
% Eco. Dis. Met Minimum Expectations	82%	91%	87%	80%	81%